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SUBJECT: A/S BLAKE-AKASHI TELECON

Classified By: Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs  
Robert O. Blake, Jr., reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In an August 14 telephone conversation with Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Blake, Japanese Special Envoy to Sri Lanka Yasushi Akashi said that Japan, anticipating a change in government following upcoming elections, will delay the proposed U.S.-Japan-India-Sri Lanka meeting in Tokyo until October. He said Japan may also invite the EU, Norway, and China. He was cautiously optimistic on easing the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka and disappointed with the lack of progress on political reconciliation. Akashi noted President Rajapaksa's view that the GSL must reach out to the Tamil Diaspora and avoid aligning itself too closely with pariah states. END SUMMARY.

POSTPONE FOUR-PARTY TALKS TO OCTOBER

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¶2. (C) Akashi informed Blake that August 30 elections in Japan would likely result in a change in government and that the Japanese would like to see the new government well installed before hosting U.S.-Japan-India-Sri Lanka talks. Akashi said Japan might also invite the EU, Norway and, perhaps, China. He promised to propose to A/S Blake new dates as soon as possible, recognizing that October will be busy ahead of the November visit to Washington of Indian PM Singh. Akashi did not rule out meeting on the margins of UNGA, but suggested that his government did not like the idea. He cited the logistical complications of organizing a multilateral meeting during UNGA and noted that it is Japan's turn to host a meeting (albeit in the Co-Chairs format) and that the GSL is counting on Japan to organize something.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ON IDP RETURNS;  
LESS ON POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

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¶3. (C) Akashi was cautiously optimistic on easing the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka, noting GSL announcements that it would return 40,000 IDPs by the end of August and the growing number of IDPs registered and issued ID cards. Akashi was disappointed with the lack of progress on political reconciliation. Akashi said he hoped President Rajapaksa has not lost his commitment to political reconciliation and expressed concern about plans to expand the SL armed forces. Akashi noted the opposition Tamil National Alliance's win in Vavuniya municipal elections as evidence that the Tamils are uncomfortable with the government -- something the GSL should pay attention to ahead of upcoming national and presidential elections.

¶4. (C) Akashi inquired about A/S Blake's August 11 meeting

with U.S. Tamil Diaspora representatives. Blake discussed the challenges the GSL faces trying to persuade Tamils that the government seeks to unify and rebuild the country. The Diaspora, with its economic resources and business experience, could play an important role. Akashi said President Rajapaksa agrees that he will need to try to win over the Diaspora.

¶5. (C) Akashi told A/S Blake that former Japanese PM Fukuda traveled to Sri Lanka recently to attend a ceremony inaugurating the Japanese-funded Sigiriya Museum and spent over five hours with President Rajapaksa. Fukuda reportedly advised Rajapaksa that he "should not lean too close" to states like Libya and Burma; Rajapaksa agreed.

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